



California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) was established as part of the Governor's Office in 1950 as the State Office of Civil Defense. In 1956, the agency became more involved in natural disaster operations, and the name was changed to the California Disaster Office. Adoption of the state's Emergency Services Act in 1970 changed the agency's name to the Office of Emergency Services.

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services coordinates overall state agency response to major disasters in support of local government. The office is responsible for assuring the state's readiness to respond to and recover from natural, manmade, and war-caused emergencies, and for assisting local governments in their emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

During major emergencies, OES may call upon all state agencies to help provide support. Due to their specialized capabilities and expertise, the California National Guard, Highway Patrol, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Conservation Corps, Department of Social Services, Department of Health Services and the Department of Transportation are the agencies most often asked to respond and assist in emergency response activities. OES may also call on its own response resources to assist local government. For example, four communications vans are available to send to disasters sites.

Portable satellite units are available to provide voice and data transmission from remote locations. OES also maintains caches of specialized equipment, principally for use by local law enforcement agencies. One hundred and twenty OES fire engines ("pumpers") are stationed with fire districts at strategic locations throughout the state and can be dispatched when needed. OES staff members are on call 24 hours a day to respond to any state or local emergency needs.

The OES Warning Center is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. From this center, warning controllers speak with county OESs and the National Warning Center in Berryville, Virginia on a daily basis. OES also maintains a 24-hour toll-free toxic release hotline, and relays spill reports to a number of other state and federal response and regulatory agencies, as well as local governments. OES coordinates the statewide Fire, Law Enforcement, and Telecommunications Mutual Aid Systems based on the "neighbor helping neighbor" concept. OES also coordinates the state's Urban Search and Rescue and Safety Assessment Volunteer programs. During emergencies, OES activates the State Operations Center (SOC) in Sacramento and the Regional Emergency Operations Centers (REOCs) in impacted areas to receive and process local requests for assistance.

OES and other state agency public information officers staff the OES Emergency News Center to provide emergency information to the public through the news media.

OES is the "grantee" for federal disaster assistance, principally from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). During the recovery phase of a disaster, OES helps local governments assess damages and assists them with federal and state grant and loan applications to repair damaged public property. People suffering losses may apply for federal and state assistance through a tollfree, teleregistration phone line. Individuals may also apply for other assistance programs administered by local and volunteer agencies such as the American Red Cross. The OES public information effort continues in this phase in cooperation with other state and federal agencies.

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OES maintains the State Emergency Plan, which outlines the organizational structure for state management of the response to natural and manmade disasters. OES assists local governments and other state agencies in developing their own emergency preparedness and response plans, in accordance with the Standardized Emergency Management System and the State Emergency Plan, for earthquakes, floods, fires, hazardous material incidents, nuclear power plant emergencies, and dam breaks.

The OES Earthquake Program provides specialized earthquake preparedness planning and technical assistance to local governments, business, schools, hospitals, the public and other groups.

In addition, OES manages the state's annual public awareness campaigns to help California residents become better prepared for emergencies. Each winter, a Winter Weather and Flood Preparedness campaign is held. Also, the California Earthquake Preparedness Month Campaign

is conducted each April and includes related events throughout the year.

OES coordinates search and rescue missions through its Law Enforcement Branch's Search and Rescue program to locate individuals lost in the mountains or wilderness. Through its Fire and Rescue Branch's Urban Search and Rescue Task Force program, OES coordinates missions for those trapped by collapsed structures or in other high risk situations. OES also provides search and rescue task force training for local fire personnel, governments and volunteers.

OES' training arm, the California Specialized Training Institute in San Luis Obispo, provides training programs for city, county, and state emergency services personnel on the latest techniques in disaster planning, response, recovery and management.

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